

SEPTEMBER 1971

Dossier on the

C.I.A.

by William R. Carson

For some time I have been disturbed by the way the CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times policy-making arm of the government. I never thought when I set up the CIA that it would be injected into peacetime cloak-and-dagger operations. — ex-President Harry S. Truman.

NOTHING has happened since that pronouncement by the agency's creator in December 1963 to remove or reduce the cause for concern over the CIA's development. As currently organized, supervised, structured and led, it may be that the CIA has outlived its usefulness. Conceivably, its very existence causes the President and the National Security Council to rely too much on clandestine operations. Possibly its reputation, regardless of the facts, is now so bad that as a foreign policy instrument the agency has become counter-productive. Unfortunately the issue of its efficiency, as measured by its performance in preventing past intelligence failures and consequent foreign policy fiascos, is always avoided on grounds of "secrecy". So American taxpayers provide upwards of \$750,000,000 a year for the CIA without knowing how the money is spent or to what extent the CIA fulfills or exceeds its authorized intelligence functions.

The gathering of intelligence is a necessary and legitimate activity in time of peace as well as in war. But it does raise a very real problem of the proper place and control of agents who are required, or authorized on their own recognizance, to commit acts of espionage. In a democracy it also poses the dilemma of secret activities and the values of a free society. Secrecy is obviously essential for espionage but it can be — and has been — perverted to hide intelligence activities even from those with the constitutional responsibility to sanction them. A common rationalization is the phrase "If the Ambassador/Secretary/President doesn't know he won't have to lie to cover up." The prolonged birth of the CIA was marked by a reluctance on the part of politicians and others to face these difficulties, and the agency as it came to exist still bears the marks of this indecision.

What we need to do is to examine how the U.S. gathers its intelligence, and consider how effective its instruments are and what room there is for improvement. Every government agency must be accountable, as Richard Helms, the CIA's Director, admitted before the American Society

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representative of the unending gambitry and bigger than life human aspect of espionage and secret operations. At this level the stakes are lower and the "struggle" frequently takes bizarre and even ludicrous twists. For, as Alexander Foote noted in his *Handbook for Spies*, the average agent's "real difficulties are concerned with the practice of his trade. The setting up of his transmitters, the obtaining of funds, and the arrangement of his rendezvous. The irritating administrative details occupy a disproportionate portion of his waking life."

As an example of the administrative hazards, one day in 1960 a technical administrative employee of the CIA stationed at its quasi-secret headquarters in Japan flew to Singapore to conduct a reliability test of a local recruit. On arrival he checked into one of Singapore's older hotels to receive the would-be spy and his CIA recruiter. Contact was made. The recruit was instructed in what a lie detector test does and was wired up, and the technician plugged the machine into the room's electrical outlet. Thereupon it blew out all the hotel's lights. The ensuing confusion and darkness did not cover a getaway by the trio. They were discovered, arrested, and jailed as American spies.

By itself the incident sounds like a sequence from an old Peters Sellers movie, however, its consequences were not nearly so funny. In performing this routine mission the CIA set off a two-stage international incident between England and the United States, caused the Secretary of State to write a letter of apology to a foreign chief of state, made the U.S. Ambassador to Singapore look like the proverbial cuckold, the final outcome being a situation wherein the United States Government lied in public — and was caught.

The Prophetic Fiction of Graham Greene

On Reading the Pentagon Papers

by Eugene G. Windchy

Though the Pentagon Papers hurt the Democrats as a party more than they do the Republicans, they chiefly benefit the war critics of both parties, and that is a major reason why the Nixon administration has reacted so strongly against the disclosures. Now the critics can buttress their case with piles of official documents that, secretly, have been agreeing with them all along. It is the government's supporters who have been misled, not its antagonists. From almost anybody's point of view, this makes our national leaders look like a pack of knaves, if not fools. It took a retired official to state the fact plainly. Publication of the Pentagon Papers, said Walt W. Rostow, "did not just hurt President Johnson. It encouraged the widespread notion that, well, you can't believe a President."

The critics have always said that the United States

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was not stopping aggression in Vietnam but was interfering in Vietnamese internal affairs. Thanks to Daniel Ellsberg, that now is more evident than before. Far from supporting the Geneva settlement, the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower considered it a "disaster" and postponed the reunification of Vietnam by free elections -- because it had no confidence in the outcome of free elections. A team of American agents launched anti-Communist activities in Vietnam even before the Geneva Conference ended; later they tried to ruin the municipal bus system in Hanoi by pouring contaminants into the fuel supply.

On its own initiative, Washington encouraged and financed what it hoped would be a permanent, non-Communist government in southern Vietnam. In the private councils of officialdom, there was little cant about giving the "South Vietnamese people" an opportunity to determine their future. It was fully realized that, left to themselves, the southern Vietnamese would choose the wrong future. Nearly a decade passed, and

the US Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, advised the State Department (on October 25, 1963) that South Vietnam was still "not ready" for "a democratic election." Thus the ideals of democracy and self-determination were subordinated to the demands of anti-Communism. (In the most authoritative secret documents, we find the American goal stated as an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam. Yet even some insiders managed to miss the point. In his memoranda, Professor Rostow kept saying that the American aim was to restore the Geneva settlement.) There can be little doubt that historians will pinpoint the American rejection of the Geneva settlement as the basic cause of a second war in Indochina.

As for the nature of the Communist-led insurgency in South Vietnam, which flared in the late 1950s, the critics repeatedly said that it had great popular support and that North Vietnamese help, though available, was probably not needed by the Viet Cong. That is why the critics have scoffed at recurrent plans for "Vietnamization." Now the Pentagon Papers reveal that the official policymakers themselves were not sure about the importance of North Vietnam's role in the war -- though they undertook to devastate that country. According to official records, the insurgency in South Vietnam began largely on its own, in response to Ngo Dinh Diem's repression. In 1959 Hanoi decided that it had better assert control of the increasingly successful rebellion. But two years later American intelligence estimated that 80-90 percent of the Viet Cong had been recruited locally, and reported little evidence of the guerrillas' relying on external supplies.

For years US strategy called for defeating the Viet Cong in the South, on their home ground, with Vietnamese troops. That strategy did not work. In the spring of 1964, American officials were ordered to go out and get enough evidence of North Vietnamese help to the Viet Cong so that "escalation" of the war could be justified if escalation became necessary.

Nobody waited for the evidence to come in. Wash-